

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.  
Published by Ralph F. Cummings, Box 75, Fisherville, Mass., U. S. A.  
Price \$1.00 per year or ten cents a copy.

VOL. 5

DECEMBER, 1936

NO. 57

## ADVENTURES IN DIME NOVEL LAND

by F. Fred Orphal

162 Remsen St., Brooklyn, N. Y., U.S.A.

If any of you fellows get a thrill out of my story thank Charlie Austin of Philadelphia. About August 1st some one told me he was a collector of old time Dime Novels. Well over forty years after I saw or read my last Dime Novel I saw an exhibit at the 42nd Street Library of Dr. O'Brien's collection; also read about his collection in the newspapers. I wrote Charley recently hardly expecting to get an answer right away, but like a real scout he wrote me a lengthy letter by return mail and holy smoke the old time names he mentioned just made the cold chills run up and down my back. Thank you very much, Charlie, for your courtesy.

Among other things he sent me Dime Novel Round Up for July, 1936, with picture of Frank Reade, because I had mentioned that I remembered reading them back in the 1880s. I also read Golden Days. On August 15th, I stopped in at 42nd Street Library to see if they had any old Golden Days on file—yes, they had a few. I looked them over to see if I could locate the last story or might I say the only story I could recall after fifty years, namely, "Oscar in Africa." I did not find it, nor could Charley Austin in his files when I got through with the few copies at the Library, some pieces of Golden Days from the edge of covers had crumbled and fell on the floor. These crumbs I took away as souvenirs, faded green they were. I recently asked my sister if she remembered Golden Days, and she answered right

off the bat, "you mean the paper with the green cover?" Just think of it to remember so quickly a paper she read over fifty years ago by the color of the cover. By the way that soft green cover still lingers in my memory. While looking over the library file thru G. D. Vol. X No. 43 (Sept. 21, 1889, is the date) I saw an article on how to make an induction coil. I remember making an induction coil about that time and to this day have wondered many times where I ever got the idea of making one, as I am kind of dumb on electrical gadgets. There is no doubt in my mind that that article inspired me to make one, and another mystery of my boyhood has been solved. At this time I might as well say that I was born October 31, 1874, in a big seaport town located about Long. 8 E. Lat. 53 N. and landed in 1881 at another large seaport Long. 73 W. Lat. 40 N. Get out your atlas, fellows, and look up the places yourselves. I lived on the East side New York, 1881 to 1897. During that period soon as I could read English I started on the old time Dime Novels, not many of course, even exchanging with others did not increase my reading as my pals had very little money to buy them. But wherever a nickle or dime could be grubbed it went for the Dime Novel. Perhaps our mothers at times may have been cheated out of the price of a novel when she sent us to the stores for something and we short changed her. We always hoofed around barefooted on the hard bluestone sidewalks and cobble stone street pavements. At night we would play cops and robbers or sat on back of trucks telling stories which at that time on the East Side were

Reprinted 1946



lined up on both sides of the streets overnight as the individual truckmen of those days could not afford stable yard rent. It was the custom of Monro's and also Bonners to give out at street corners occasionally copies of their papers, free, with a chapter of each serial story in the Family Story Paper and New York Ledger. We boys had a little trouble to get these as they were for adults only, but those we did get were read by all of us, and later taken home for the women folks, especially the Family Story paper as it had mostly romantic love stories such as Bertha, the pretty sewing machine girl, and Nellie, the beautiful cloak model.

I recall getting one of the Ledgers that had a story, "The Renegade," only the first chapter. It was so interesting that I got the Ledger as long as that story lasted. How I ever managed to pay the small price each week is beyond me.

You old timers may recall the wooden Indians that used to grace the front of all cigar and newspaper stores in their bright colors. Well, I have good cause to remember them as they are closely connected with my Dime Novel Days. Once a week I would go to my local store guarded by the wooden Indian where every week the owner would hang up the latest issues on a six-foot string, this being the width of his show window. Old King Brady's, Nick Carters, Frank Reade's, Deadwood Dick's, James Boys, Golden Days, etc., that's where I went to this store window regularly buying an occasional one when I had the cash. Of course, I had to be satisfied mostly with a look at the front page as they hung on the string in the window. The wooden Indian was on rollers and was taken inside every night at closing time. A wire hook about two feet long hung on the back of the Indian, this was hooked into a screw eye at store front to keep the Indian from rolling away. One day I was so absorbed in the novel display and as I had the price to buy the one selected, instead of walking in front of the Indian to enter the store I rushed into the store behind the big "Chief Standing Bull," evidently forgetting all about that wire hook which was just on a level with my eyes. Well that wire hook gave the bridge of my

nose an awful smack and put a nice little dent in my straight nose which I had up to that time. The dent is still on my nose. This happened about fifty years ago. I took a stroll over to this locality recently to see how the store looks now. It is still there—everything as it was fifty years ago, but occupied by another type of business.

I recently became a good friend of a big Sioux Indian Chief who has been a visitor to my home. I should have complained to him about the treatment I received from one of his wooden ancestors, but we had other things to talk about. You all have heard of Sitting Bull. Well, my friend wears the beaded vest worn by Sitting Bull for the first time since 1853.

On the East Side we also had the Globe Museum located on the Bowery near Houston Street. A seventy-five year old actress, Fanny Herring played Western Melodramas there for many years, a new one every week, admission 10c. She did plenty of shooting (stage was about five feet deep and twenty feet wide). Fanny always killed the villain at the first shot. That always brought down the house.

Now, fellers, from 1897 until this August about fifty years I have never handled, or read a Dime Novel of the old days, but I have never lost interest in them from the standpoint of boyhood memories. I have read very little fiction but read plenty of true Western stories available in public libraries. I have been a member of the Oregon Trail Association, I met the founder, Ezra Meeker, before he died when 96 years of age. Meeker went over the trail in 1854 and came back over the same route about thirty years ago with a covered wagon and team of oxen. I have his well-pictured book about all his adventures, I also saw him with his wagon, etc., when he arrived in New York over thirty years ago. A party in Rapid City, S. D., wrote a book about Calamity Jane and I think Wild Bill, that's true, no fiction. I wrote the author and received a lot of data about Deadwood Dick as that locality was Dick's old hunting ground as I understand it.

As soon as I read the Round-Up sent me by Charlie Austin I got in touch with Ralph Cummings and ordered a dozen back numbers and Oh, boy! what a host of old timers telling about



how they started reading them and besides the different articles by those that buy and sell them at this time.

I received from Ralph the other day the back cover only of Beadle's Dime Novel list of authors about 8x12½. I noticed that Beadles were located at 98 William street. Number 98-100-106 William street, entire block front, now is occupied by the Woodbridge Building. It must have been built about 1895 for I worked in Woodbridge Building from 1898 to about 1901. Beadie's Building, No. 98, was on northeast corner William and Platt streets. This according to city tax map.

I worked on Maiden Lane near William street, 1892 to 1898 and must have passed No. 98 many times before the new building was put up.

That author's list of Beadie's sent me by Ralph Cummings I looked over very carefully as it recalled another story I enjoyed but I did not see it listed. The story is entitled "The Eye of Jube," and if any one who reads this should run across that story advise Ralph Cummings, so he can advise me. Thanks.

RAGGED-DICK was a great favorite, I think by Alger. I read that many times, and tried to get it in the local library the other day and it was not listed probably because there is no call for these old timers.

In one of the articles in a recent Round Up mention was made about localities mentioned in the old timers, how one would try to locate the places mentioned in the tales. Well that has been a favorite pastime of mine ever since I was able to read. In fact, every story I have read for years where a locality is mentioned I have looked the place up on maps, etc. Ten years ago I got a book which gives the name of every town in the U. S. A., so that I could follow up scene of action. And I have a large collection of maps to follow up places in the books I read on travel and exploration. Of these I read many every year. I personally might not now get much of a thrill in collecting the old time Dime Novels, Circus and Theatre programs, cigarette pictures, stamps, etc. But believe it or not I want to get the Dime Novel Round Up every month and in my small way encourage Ralph Cummings and others of his tribe to boost their business. I hope to see the day when

a full file of all the old timers are put on display so that I and other old timers can at least just gaze on the covers. Of course they will have to be put under glass or in glass cases so that they would not be borrowed when the Museum Guard is looking the other way and the borrower forgets to return them. I guess we all would be tempted to purloin a few and not let the deed trouble our conscience. I have an idea along this line that would make it possible to put the old timers on display and at same time keep them in first class condition. Even to the point that the custodian could permit a certain copy to be handled and taken out of its case. I understand all the collections of valuable copies in hands of collectors are under lock and key and in Libraries they are stored away so no one can ever see them. FINIS.

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#### REAPPEARING LEGENDS ABOUT JESSE JAMES

Next to the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce and his reported death at the hands of Mexican bandits, perhaps no other character in recent American history has given rise to more conflicting reports than the famous Jesse James. The death of the outlaw at the hands of Bob Ford, a former follower, has been much disputed, and for years men claiming to be Jesse James have turned up in the region once terrorized by his gang.

Not long ago an aged man visited the Governor of Missouri with the claim that he was the outlaw, asserting that he had been a wanderer for forty years and asking for a full pardon. Some citizens of a Missouri town once frequented by the James boys, among them the Chief of Police, who as a boy had known the outlaw, took the claim seriously.—N. Y. Times, Aug. 14, 1932.

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#### REMINISCENCES

Back in the '80s, when folks put on linen dusters if they were going out for a drive, we had our tastes in literature. The Life of Jesse James and Peck's Bad Boy were favorites with boys. Little girls read the Dotty Dimple books and Chatterbox. Both read Louisa Alcott's stories and Toby Ty-



ler. (They are going strong with the children still.)

Boys took the Golden Days or the Youth's Companion with permission, and some without permission took the Boys of New York. Upper class families took Harper's—with the tan cover with the Cupids dropping flowers. Others took the Fireside Companion. There was an utterly lost section that considered the Police Gazette good reading, but it was mostly confined to barber shops. Out in the country Hostetter's and other almanacs were about all the light literature they had. A visitor would be entertained with the jokes therefrom—pretty funny, some of them, at that.—Old Timer from Nebraska.

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John C. Winston, Philadelphia,  
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